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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 107: Advancement of women (A/55/3, A/55/38, A/55/138-S/2000/693, A/55/162-S/2000/715, A/55/271, A/55/293, A/55/308, A/55/322, A/55/385 and A/55/399 and Corr.1; A/C.3/55/3 and A/C.3/55/4)

Agenda item 108: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (A/55/74, A/55/162-S/2000/715 and A/55/341; A/C.3/55/4)

1. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to begin joint consideration of agenda items 107 and 108.

2. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the current session marked the culmination of a period of intense activity and took place against the background of the historical consensus reached at the Millennium Summit. Moreover, the Secretary-General had called on the international community to identify and act on the challenges ahead and reshape the United Nations so that it could make a real and measurable difference to people's lives in the twenty-first century.

3. During the year, the twenty-third and twenty-fourth special sessions of the General Assembly had been held to consider implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, respectively. The strong sense of commitment and political will shown by Governments during those special sessions was encouraging, because, combined with a shared vision and strong partnerships, it would help to overcome obstacles and fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the other measures and initiatives of the special sessions. The support provided by the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, was equally encouraging. The Beijing Conference had been inspired by and had drawn energy from the non-governmental organizations. They had continued to be a critical force during the subsequent period, culminating in the participation of more than 4,000 non-governmental and other civil-society organizations in the twenty-third special session. During that session, the role of the Platform for Action as a blueprint for achieving gender equality had been reaffirmed, while the Platform itself had been strengthened and updated in many areas, including violence against women, empowerment, health, education, human rights, poverty, debt relief, globalization, armed conflict and political participation. The Third Committee should ensure that the decisions and recommendations of the special session were fully integrated into the work of other Committees.

4. The President of the General Assembly had suggested in his closing statement to the special session that if Governments demonstrated the necessary political will and allocated the human and financial resources required, the goals of gender equality, development and peace would become reality early in the twenty-first century.

5. Such optimism was well founded. For example, over the five years that had passed since the Beijing Conference, 17 States had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, bringing the total number of States parties to 166. Also, on 22 December 2000, the Optional Protocol to the Convention, ratified by 11 States and signed by 62, would enter into force. It was to be hoped that the commitment shown by the Member States in elaborating and accepting the Optional Protocol would be mirrored in the attention and support they would give to providing adequate human and financial resources so as to ensure that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would fulfil its entire mandate. In other critical areas of concern set forth in the Platform, similar progress had been made, but many challenges remained. In his opening statement to the Third Committee at the current session, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had placed the work on gender issues and social and human-rights questions in the broader context of global development. After indicating that globalization was the dominant trend, he had made it clear that it generated productive forces but also had negative effects, because it had the potential to accentuate inequalities both between and within countries. For globalization to benefit everyone, it should incorporate widely shared values and practices as well as strategies that reflected global social needs. The primary challenge in the period following the twenty-third special session was to

ensure that women did not bear the brunt of the negative effects of globalization.

6. In the area of poverty, World Bank estimates suggested that 1.5 billion people, the majority of them women, lived on $1 a day and that that number would reach 1.9 billion by 2015. In order to alleviate and eliminate poverty, it was essential to reduce poverty among women and increase their economic viability. Member States should bear in mind the links between poverty and gender inequality in the preparatory consultations for the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development and address gender issues in the context of development and the economic empowerment of women.

7. The growing AIDS pandemic in the developing world was another critical challenge. HIV/AIDS threatened the survival of entire nations in Africa and had a disproportionate impact on women, as had been recognized by 13 women Ministers for Foreign Affairs in a joint letter of 11 September 2000 addressed to the Secretary-General. By the end of 2000, 13 million more women would be affected and another 4 million would have died. In order to confront that pandemic, a new approach was needed, one that combined the promotion of basic education on prevention and treatment with full, equal and affordable access to primary health care. At the Millennium Summit, the Head of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) had called on 70 First Ladies to help ensure that the disease was no longer a stigma and to speak out in favour of strategies to combat it.

8. As for the question of women and armed conflict, while women's role in conflict prevention and settlement had been recognized, their role in peacemaking and peace-building must be expanded. For the first time, on International Women's Day in 2000, the Security Council had recognized the central role of women in conflict resolution and peacemaking and peace-building, thereby reaffirming its resolution 1314 (2000) on children and armed conflict. It had also called for the integration of a gender perspective into all policies, programmes and projects relating to women in armed conflict. The Security Council and the Third Committee must ensure that that momentum was further accelerated, and she looked forward to the debate on women and armed conflict to be held in the Security Council. The Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (A/55/138-S/2000/693) laid the groundwork for what could be done.

9. As for the persistence and deepening of violence against women, according to reports published recently by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 20 to 50 per cent of women everywhere had experienced domestic violence. Had it not been for infanticide, neglect and sex-selective abortions, 60 million more girls would be alive, and the incidence of sexual violence, early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, dowry deaths and so-called honour killings had increased. There was also the issue of trafficking in women. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development, based in Vienna, estimated that every year, 400,000 people, the majority of them women and girls, usually in their teens, were smuggled into the European Union — lured by false promises of employment — and ended up trapped in unacceptable conditions of sexual slavery or forced labour.

10. The poor representation of women in political life could not be tolerated. Of the 146 Heads of State and Government who had attended the Millennium Summit, only four had been women: from Bangladesh, Finland, Latvia and New Zealand. At a meeting between three of those women and women heads of United Nations agencies, a number of decisions had been adopted and an appeal had been made for the achievement of the goal of 50 per cent women in United Nations posts as soon as possible and for women special representatives in peacekeeping operations. It had been recognized that an important aspect of women in decision-making was their role in the United Nations Secretariat and in the agencies of the system. In the past decade, the percentage of women in professional and high-level posts had risen from 28 to 39 per cent, and from 7 per cent to 30.9 per cent at the D-1 level. There were currently four women Assistant Secretaries-General, and in the number of Assistant Directors-General the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank had also increased. Advances had been made in creating an accountability tool whereby the Secretary-General could measure the progress achieved in that area by each of the programme managers. The report on improvement of the status of women in the

Secretariat (A/55/399 and Corr.1) would also go before the Fifth Committee, which, in 2000, would address personnel questions, including the participation of women.

11. In the next five years, priority should be given to the implementation of practices which had been successful in some countries. To that end, the Commission on the Status of Women should change its focus and working methods and increase its interaction with other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and with the Security Council in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming would be reflected in its activities and policies.

12. There was close coordination between the Secretariat and the agencies, funds and programmes. The members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) were actively collaborating to develop competencies and methodologies for good practices, gender mainstreaming and gender training and budgeting. The system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005 would enhance strategic coordination and planning in the United Nations system. There was effective coordination among her Office, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), although the financial situation of INSTRAW was so dire that there was talk of its imminent closure. Despite efforts to implement its new mandate on revitalization, and the efforts of the Secretariat to obtain contributions from donors, the Institute's financial situation remained critical. She was nonetheless grateful to those countries which had contributed and urged those Member States which had pledged contributions to pay them as early as possible.

13. **Ms. Ertürk** (Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on agenda items 107 and 108, said that the report on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/55/308) contained information on accessions to and ratifications of the Convention, reservations entered by States Parties, and objections to and the withdrawal or modification of reservations. It also contained information on the Optional Protocol and on the progress made towards acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention, relating to the meeting time of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

14. The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its twenty-second and twenty-third sessions (A/55/38) dealt with the reports presented by the States parties to the Convention and with the adoption of decisions aimed at assisting States parties in meeting their reporting obligations and streamlining the Committee's work. Special mention should be made of decision 23/II on overdue reports.

15. In his report on trafficking in women and girls (A/55/322), the Secretary-General noted that the question was receiving priority attention at the national, regional and international levels and made a number of recommendations on measures, including legislation and penalties to discourage traffickers and to protect and assist victims. The report also stressed the importance of compiling data and information on trafficking patterns and strategies to deal with trafficking. The ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality also made a recommendation for the compilation and dissemination of good practices in interventions and strategies to combat the problem.

16. The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/55/293) focused on the results of the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council and on the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The main priority of the United Nations system in that regard still remained the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in programmes and policies.

17. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (A/55/341) reflected on the implications of the outcome document for the implementation of the Platform for Action and on the role of governments, civil society and the United Nations system.

18. The report maintained that the Political Declaration and outcome document complemented the

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and identified global trends in the areas of globalization, international migration currents, HIV/AIDS, and communication and information technologies, that called for new actions in each critical area of the Platform. The report also focused on the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Commission on the Status of Women, the gender focal points, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM, with a view to more effectively discharging the new responsibilities given by the special session of the Assembly.

19. Part III of the report was devoted to recommendations for action by the General Assembly in light of the outcome of the special session. It highlighted the need for effective action on political commitments, the allocation of sufficient resources for programmes and projects, and strengthening of the capacity of those national and international institutions that were instrumental in the implementation of the objectives set out at Beijing and at the special session.

20. **Ms. Stamiris** (Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Institute (A/55/385) outlined the process by which INSTRAW, the only United Nations body that planned, organized and delivered its work programme using the new technologies for the empowerment of women, had successfully implemented the various mandates of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly with a view to revamping the Institute and charting a new direction. The electronic mechanism being used was the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS), which was creatively pioneering a new global strategy for development cooperation that addressed both the strategic and practical needs of women. GAINS had a database of gender-related research and training resources and a dynamic and interactive virtual workshop on gender that consisted of a platform of researchers, specialists and national and regional focal points.

21. Following the launching of the GAINS prototype during the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, INSTRAW had prepared the first programme of work, whose implementation was due to begin during the period from November 2000 to April 2001, corresponding to the second phase of GAINS. The programme of work would focus on three critical thematic areas, namely, gender, politics and conflict prevention and resolution; women, business and micro-enterprise development; and women's empowerment and capacity-building through new technologies.

22. A proposal had been made for two global collaborative research projects using the GAINS mechanism. INSTRAW would develop the conceptual framework and collaborative methodology with its partner institutions and, depending on the availability of resources, implementation of the projects would begin in the spring or autumn of 2001.

23. For the training programme, contacts had been made with two international non-governmental organizations in African and Balkan regions and with a university in Europe in order to develop a module on gender and armed conflict in relation to conflict prevention and resolution, with a special focus on the cases of Africa and the Balkans. The module would be used during the 2001-2002 biennium in a series of online courses with instructors. INSTRAW would collaborate in a series of workshops organized by a Balkan women's non-governmental organization on the promotion of stability, human rights and peace in south-east Europe. It had participated in the first workshop in September 2000 and would be co-sponsoring the second one in February 2001 and the last one in April 2001.

24. For the information programme, INSTRAW was preparing a global database to disseminate information on publications, projects and activities having to do with research and training, bibliographies, training materials, research institutions, links, news and other resources. The database would include material on the three critical thematic areas of INSTRAW, and a common framework for data collection and training would be developed so as to improve the capacity of network members to make use of GAINS.

25. As part of the networking programme, INSTRAW had already begun developing the interactive, dynamic part of GAINS with a view to decentralizing it to the national and regional levels. A virtual workshop would promote consultation and dialogue on critical issues, generate new knowledge and promote an exchange of information and experience.

26. If sufficient resources were not provided to sustain its operations during the transition period of

2001, INSTRAW would close its doors at the end of the year. It had developed a fund-raising strategy that promised to bear fruit the following year. However, financial resources were required immediately to bridge the financial gap between the current year and the next. Therefore, notwithstanding the encouraging mandates, good wishes and support from Governments, partner institutions and women at large, INSTRAW might be obliged to end its 20-year history at the end of the year, at a time, ironically, when its new vision had become a reality and it had carved out a unique role within the United Nations system. INSTRAW should be given a chance to complete the work it had begun. Globalization demanded new methods of organizing, learning, creating, informing and empowering women. GAINS was groundbreaking and would make a difference in the long run if Governments allowed INSTRAW to continue its pioneering work in using new technologies for the advancement of women worldwide.

27. **Ms. Pansieri** (Deputy Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that, as the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the Fund (A/55/271) illustrated, its programme was designed to support action by Governments, civil society and United Nations agencies, focusing on the three thematic areas indicated in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report. She wished to highlight three areas of follow-up to the 199 actions recommended in the Political Declaration (A/RES/S-23/2) and the outcome document (A/RES/S-23/3) of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which corresponded to those three thematic areas. The first was an analysis of the degree to which national and local budgets took gender issues into account. The outcome document had underscored the potential power of gender-aware budgets to transform the manner in which national economic policies and budgetary allocations were decided. To assist with the five-year assessments of the Beijing and Copenhagen conferences, UNIFEM had launched a new biennial report, *Progress of the World's Women*, that explored commitments made and progress achieved on the path to gender equality. During the past three years, UNIFEM had been working with partners in southern Africa and the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop new tools and approaches to underpin gender analysis of budgets. The Governments of Belgium and Italy were supporting an effort to build capacity throughout the world in that type of analysis and UNIFEM looked forward to establishing many more such partnerships in the use of that valuable tool over the next five years.

28. The second area involved the bringing of women to the negotiating table. In an era of globalization, it was more critical than ever for women to take part in shaping the policies and practices that governed national, regional and global agreements. Whether it was a matter of the social responsibility of corporations, new trade agreements, the reconstruction of societies emerging from war, or action in response to the scourge of HIV/AIDS, women's voices and priorities must be heard. The credibility of peace processes that excluded participants on the basis of ethnicity, religion or political affiliation was often called into question. Yet the systematic exclusion of more than 50 per cent of the population on the basis of gender, or the fact that warlords, not women, were brought to the negotiating table, were rarely challenged. In July, UNIFEM had had the opportunity to brief the leaders of Burundi's 19 negotiating parties about the gender issues involved in the negotiations, which had led to the convening of the first all-party Burundi women's peace conference. More than 50 Burundian women had met in Arusha with the facilitator of the peace talks, and had presented their proposals for the draft peace accord. Twenty-three of those recommendations had been included in the final peace accord. In another context, there had been a commendable initiative by Namibia to bring the issue of women, peace and security before the Security Council.

29. The third area was the elimination of gender-based violence. One of the most encouraging trends was the strong commitment by Governments and United Nations partners to respond to violence against women as an obstacle to equality, peace and development. There was a critical need to improve data collection at the national level on the extent and nature of gender-based violence, and stronger mechanisms were needed for enforcing new laws and adopting preventive and protective measures. A key mechanism in that regard was the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which in the previous four years had awarded over $4 million to projects in 65 countries. The requests received by the Trust Fund were an indicator of the urgent need for more resources to support innovative solutions at the country level. In 2000, the Trust Fund had received close to 200 proposals with funding

requests of $12.5 million, but it had only been able to provide $1 million to 24 organizations in 20 countries.

30. The programme of UNIFEM encompassed far more than the three areas mentioned. Its work relating to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, involving the linking of women to markets and support for their access to information and communications technologies, remained major strategic priorities. The achievement of gender equality would only be possible with the cooperation of all interested parties, since that challenge was too large for any single institution or Government. UNIFEM was ready to work with Member States, civil society and United Nations organizations to make the twenty-first century free of violence and poverty and to guarantee the human rights of all men and women.

31. **Ms. González Martínez** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 54/4, annex) would guarantee to women the enjoyment of their rights under the Convention in all areas, and was an excellent tool for raising awareness of the importance of achieving equality between men and women and the negative effects of socio-cultural stereotypes which perpetuated discriminatory attitudes towards women.

32. However, it must be recalled that the procedures of the Optional Protocol would always be subject to national resources, and that its greatest value lay in its influence at the national level. States parties would have to examine the resources available at the national level and their effectiveness in preventing and remedying violations of women's rights. Only action at the national level would create an environment that would allow women and girls full enjoyment of their human rights and a serious and prompt response to their complaints.

33. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had decided to do everything possible to promote the effective and sound implementation of the Optional Protocol. It therefore called on the Secretary-General to ensure that it would receive the necessary human and administrative resources to comply fully with that new mandate, and also requested the support of the General Assembly, which was indispensable. The Optional Protocol, which had awakened great expectations and hopes in women all over the world, had been ratified by 11 States parties since being opened for signature on 10 December 1999. The Committee had observed with great satisfaction that many of the measures agreed at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to overcome obstacles to and accelerate the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action fully coincided with the Committee's comments and general recommendations, and supplemented the requirements of the Convention with respect to the need to eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, marital rape and other recommendations regarding women's sexual and reproductive health. There had also been agreement that women continued to shoulder a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities and care for the children and the family, and that in order to achieve full participation of men and women in the public and private spheres, they must be allowed to reconcile and share equitably both work and family responsibilities.

34. It had also been encouraging to note that Member States had reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate the universal ratification of the Convention and had reiterated the value of the Platform for Action, while recommending that the scope of reservations to the Convention should be limited and urging the ratification of its Optional Protocol, which would enter into force in December.

35. The Committee had also noted with great satisfaction that Member States had proposed that States parties should be assisted, upon their request, in their efforts to implement the Convention, and that they should be encouraged to pay attention to the Committee's concluding comments and general recommendations (General Assembly resolution S-23/3, para. 85 (g)). She hoped that the General Assembly would continue to develop procedures to monitor the ongoing implementation of the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the measures agreed at the special session of the General Assembly, and that the Convention and the Committee would continue to receive support from all States.

36. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba) requested more information on the debate that would be held in the Security Council on women, and asked if the meeting

would be open or closed. Cuba would support all possible efforts on behalf of women, but noted with concern the growing interference of the Security Council in social, humanitarian and human-rights issues. The Council was more frequently considering such items and taking decisions which actually were attempts to prejudice the consideration of those issues in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the appropriate bodies for the consideration of those items.

37. With regard to INSTRAW, her delegation was concerned that funds from the Development Account might be used to preserve it, and at the possibility that it would close in 2000. Other forms of financing should be considered, such as the regular budget. A draft resolution was being prepared by the Group of 77 and China; Cuba supported that effort, but stressed that funds should not be diverted from the important task of financing development.

38. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women) said that, since the beginning of the year, an attempt had been made to highlight the issue of women in all aspects of the maintenance and consolidation of peace. The Security Council would consider the question of women and armed conflict as a result of the meeting held in Windhoek, as a joint initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Division for the Advancement of Women, in order to examine women's roles in five peacekeeping missions, the ways in which they had helped to keep peace, and how to proceed in the future. The methodology to be used had not yet been decided, and there would probably be two meetings, one consisting of informal consultations and the other a formal one.

39. Concerning the use by INSTRAW of development funds, Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/24 provided more opportunities for using funds of the United Nations system to assist INSTRAW. However, it had been clearly indicated that such funds could only be used to finance projects that met the funding criteria and not for the core financing of the Institute. Contributions to the core resources, core staffing and the work of INSTRAW must come from Member States.

40. **Ms. Stamiris** (Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women), referring to the development funds, said that they were specifically related to a proposal for the implementation in Africa of a project to provide training on the use of new technology to mainstream gender issues into national planning; they were not meant for the funding of INSTRAW.

41. **Ms. Pansieri** (Deputy Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women) agreed with the comments of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women concerning the debate in the Security Council. The Namibia initiative would provide a good opportunity to highlight the role of women in the areas of peace and security.

42. **Ms. Méchin** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that the twenty-third special session of the United Nations and the regional meetings which had preceded them had reaffirmed, inter alia, that the success of future action and the advancement of women in general depended on the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Governments had reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, their responsibility for achieving those objectives and the equal importance of all the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform, which remained the cornerstone of the European Union's policy for the advancement of women and the basis for its action. The final document reaffirmed the achievements of the Beijing Platform and contained significant advances made in many areas. It had stated that no forms of violence would be tolerated and that the obligation of States to develop policies to combat violence against women also applied to domestic situations, including marital rape and some customary or traditional practices. Particular attention should be paid to so-called honour crimes. The European Union hoped that the resolution on the subject introduced by one of its member States would receive the widest possible support.

43. As it was noted in the Millennium Declaration (A/Res/55/2), promoting equality and empowering women were effective ways to combat poverty and achieve sustainable development. Globalization must be accompanied by a greater role for women in decision-making processes — whether political or economic — at both the national and international levels. That required not only a strong political will, but also suitable instruments, namely, gender-

disaggregated statistics, quantified objectives and indicators which could be used in any country. Poverty-eradication policies should reduce the disparities between men and women in the allocation of resources, land reforms, the introduction of technology and the formulation of development policies.

44. The education of girls and women was the key to their advancement. To that end, quantified objectives had been adopted for the campaign against illiteracy and for primary and secondary education and the need for access to higher education, especially in the area of technology, had been emphasized. Both women and men must share in the huge opportunities offered by the new sectors.

45. The European Union welcomed the progress achieved at the special session, although it would have liked to see even greater progress. It was particularly disappointed that the resolutions adopted had not specifically mentioned sexual rights, nor had they taken into account the progress made at the special session with respect to population and development on matters such as sexual health, reproduction and abortion. It also regretted the fact that the legislative measures taken by many States to end discrimination based on sexual orientation had not been mentioned.

46. The European Union particularly welcomed the cooperation between the Economic Commission for Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. It also wished to stress the importance of international cooperation and welcomed the contribution of the United Nations in that regard. The achievements of the twenty-third special session in the area of women's rights and equality must be reflected in the work of the current session, especially with respect to human rights.

47. The objective of universal ratification in 2000 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had not been achieved. States which had not yet ratified the Convention, should do so. It should be recalled that States parties were under the obligation to translate their commitments into legislation to ensure that they were effectively implemented. They must also take into account the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, whose powers would be widened and which should be given sufficient resources. By making it possible for communications to be submitted by individuals or groups of individuals, the Optional Protocol to the Convention (A/Res/54/4, annex) would give a fresh impetus to the implementation of the Convention. The European Union welcomed the submission of the tenth instrument of ratification, which would enable the Protocol to enter into force by the end of the year. It urged the States which had not yet done so, to ratify it.

48. The European Union also welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/Res/54/263, annexes I and II), which were very important for the protection of the girl child.

49. The Commission on the Status of Women was making dynamic and effective efforts to defend women's rights, promote equality and take follow-up measures with respect to the outcome of the special session.

50. It was very important that the convention against transnational organized crime and its optional protocols to, inter alia, prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, should be adopted at the current session. Combined efforts could put an end to the latter problem, as well as to all forms of exploitation, economic or sexual, of which women and children were the principal victims. It was essential that the aforesaid instruments should enter into force rapidly, as a basis for international cooperation to prevent and combat such trafficking.

51. The European Union had been executing equality programmes since 1975 and would shortly be taking up two issues that were fundamental for women's true autonomy: participation in decision-making and the balancing of professional and family life. In 1996, it had adopted a recommendation on women's equality in political, economic, social and cultural decision-making, and in 1999, European Union member States had renewed that commitment at the Paris Conference. The elaboration of indicators and member States' commitment to attaining quantified targets for gender equality in public decision-making formed part of European policy. The possibility of establishing a European institute for gender issues was also being studied.

52. Social change required that a balance be achieved between family and professional life; in that connection, the European Union was to elaborate some

10 indicators, based on macroeconomic and socio-economic data. Since the issue was fundamental for the organization of society and economic activity, a conference of ministers responsible for equality would be discussing it in Paris on 27 October 2000, as would an expert seminar on professional equality on 24 November. For the first time, several European Union councils of ministers would examine gender equality in relation to an agenda item. The mainstreaming of gender equality in all policies was also reflected in various initiatives that were important for the future of the European Union: for instance, in December 2000, the Nice summit meeting of the European Council would examine the European social programme, which was designed to encourage greater interaction among economic, social and labour policies and one of whose objectives was gender equality.

53. The promotion of women's rights and equality goals were an integral part of European Union measures with regard to third countries. The Union was supporting many projects that promoted the exercise of women's rights and women's participation in electoral processes and decision-making throughout the world. Gender equality was one of the overall objectives of the Union's development cooperation policies and guaranteed the effectiveness of sustainable development policies.

54. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, at the historic Millennium Summit, Heads of State and Government had pledged to promote human rights and international peace and security, eradicate poverty and emphasize human development. The Security Council's open debate on women, peace and security should contribute to the elaboration of further measures that recognized the positive role played by women in resolving conflict.

55. SADC had taken note of the Secretary-General's recommendation on the importance of increasing participation by women in decision-making at all levels, and particularly at the highest levels, within the United Nations system and on nominating candidates to all bodies on an equitable geographical basis.

56. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had been symbolic of the long road that had been travelled in the struggle for women's equality. Its protracted and difficult negotiations had shown that a genuine partnership between men and women had yet to be achieved, and the review of the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action had shown how effective women could be when they were part of the decision-making process and how society benefited from their participation. Not only had women made progress in the 12 critical areas of concern, but they could now concentrate on emerging issues such as globalization, investment opportunities, trade and labour standards and the transfer of new technologies. Persistent obstacles also remained to be overcome, such as violence against women and girls, which must be treated as a criminal offence, and the feminization of poverty, particularly in Africa, which was intolerable because the capacity existed to reduce it through collective regional efforts and in partnership with the international community.

57. SADC member States had taken the commitments made in Beijing very seriously, and they therefore welcomed the political declaration and outcome document of the special session which had reinforced the Platform for Action. The empowerment of women was a priority for SADC, which had been actively implementing an institutional framework for gender for a number of years. Among other measures, it had established a sector-coordinating gender unit to monitor the implementation of its gender plan of action.

58. At the special session, Governments had been urged to set time-bound targets and, where appropriate, quotas for achieving women's equal access to public life. In 1999, SADC Heads of State had adopted special measures to ensure women's political empowerment in order to reach a 30-per-cent target for women's participation in political and decision-making structures by 2005.

59. In the area of access to economic resources, a gender analysis of the SADC trade protocol had been carried out and a regional programme of action was being developed to increase women's access to economic structures in all countries of the region, to ensure that they benefited from the opportunities created by trade liberalization and globalization. In Malawi in 1997, the SADC Heads of State had adopted a declaration on gender and development which called for the economic empowerment of women and the strengthening of their capacity to participate in economic development. Shortly thereafter, they had signed an addendum to that declaration, entitled "The

prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls". At the special session, it had also been recommended that Governments should assess progress towards gender equality through the gender analysis of national budgets. In partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, SADC had taken the lead in implementing that good practice and it encouraged UNIFEM to share that experience with other regions.

60. A decade previously, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) had been regarded primarily as a serious health crisis. Now, however, it was clear that it was also a development and human crisis. In the SADC region in particular, AIDS had reached catastrophic proportions: of the 34 million people living with HIV/AIDS, 24 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the region continued to face the impact of other diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, and problems such as malnutrition, deteriorating health services, lack of resources, natural disasters and conflicts had further aggravated the situation, especially for women and children. A SADC task force had been mandated to develop a strategic framework and programme of action on HIV/AIDS, and the SADC region was also participating in the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa, a joint initiative of the United Nations system, African Governments, donor countries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. It believed that the holding of a special session of the General Assembly on that issue in 2001 would be an important step forward in finding practical solutions to the epidemic.

61. SADC welcomed the forthcoming entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it believed would strengthen the Convention by providing women with an additional remedy for defending their rights. It called on all Member States to sign and ratify the Protocol as soon as possible.

62. It was necessary to accelerate implementation of the many commitments and resolutions on the advancement of women and to translate shared values into action, particularly in view of Africa's special needs. SADC stood ready to work towards addressing major social issues and to ensure the effective implementation of global human rights commitments, and it committed itself to the removal of all institutional values and policies that continued to disadvantage women.

63. **Ms. Kaiser** (Bangladesh) said that her country had fought for and won both liberation and the restoration of democracy; its liberation war had made the women of Bangladesh self-confident, conscious of their rights and ready to enter the twenty-first century.

64. During the past decade, the international community had promised women a better future and greater dignity, as well as equality, development and peace. The decisions taken in Beijing had been followed up by Governments, international organizations and civil society, and progress had been made in many areas.

65. In Bangladesh, the Government, in partnership with civil society, had increased investment in education and health with a special focus on the girl child. New laws had been enacted to uphold women's human rights, and a multisectoral project had been undertaken to eliminate violence against women. The number of women in decision-making bodies, in particular in local councils, had risen and their participation in all areas of national development had increased.

66. In reviewing progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, it had been found that, since the adoption of the Platform for Action, significant challenges had emerged that affected women. A further set of actions in the context of a globalized world had therefore been adopted. The key to success was to empower women so that they could make a difference. Accordingly, as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had said, answers must be found to the complex, multidimensional issues standing in the way of women's empowerment.

67. Five areas were vital to such efforts. First, poverty must be eradicated. Feminization of poverty remained a problem and would continue unless women were truly empowered so that they could emerge from poverty. Her Government was combining microcredit, which had done much to eradicate poverty and make women economically self-sufficient, with other measures, as part of a comprehensive anti-poverty initiative whose success would depend on a collective effort by the Government and civil society and on the support of the international community. The

international financial institutions must also reorient their approaches to poverty eradication.

68. Second, globalization, which often affected women more than men, had reversed many of the gains achieved in poverty eradication and employment. However, the economic disruption that it had caused was only the tip of the iceberg; its social impact had been much wider. Women's role in the family and the community had been diminished and the loss of social safety nets had made them easy prey for traffickers and exploiters. Global advances in communication had facilitated trafficking in women and girls and effective global and regional anti-trafficking measures and initiatives were therefore needed.

69. Third, conflict and civil strife had increased the misery of the civilian population, in particular women and children. However, in recent years, more and more women were taking initiatives in promoting peace in their communities and in their families, demonstrating their precious contribution to peace. Women's role and involvement in peacekeeping needed to be enhanced. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the recommendations of the high-level Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, although it noted that the Panel's report made no mention of gender issues, a flaw that needed to be corrected.

70. Fourth, her Government promoted equal rights for men and women, as guaranteed in the Constitution, and had become a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had received the required number of ratifications to enter into force.

71. Lastly, including women in policy-making at all levels would help to increase gender sensitivity. In particular, women's involvement at the local level could bring immediate benefits. In Bangladesh, positive results could already be observed from the election of over 14,000 women to local councils. The 1971 war of liberation had also made women more self-confident and more aware of the importance of taking part in building the country's future.

72. **Ms. Yanagawa** (Japan) said that the adoption of the political declaration and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had been another step forward towards achieving a gender-equal society. Those results, which had been made possible by the strong political will and serious efforts of all parties concerned, could contribute to maintaining and strengthening the momentum generated at the Fourth World Conference on Women and put the international community on the right track towards its common goal of equality, development and peace. At the special session, participants had not only learned about the progress made all over the world in promoting women's rights but also been alerted to what else needed to be done to fully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The special session had ushered in a new phase in which all parties would need to strengthen their efforts to find practical ways of fully implementing the results achieved.

73. In the area of the advancement of women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had served as the principal international legal instrument for the protection and promotion of women's human rights, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had played a major role in overseeing the implementation of the Convention by States parties. The Committee would assume additional responsibilities when the Optional Protocol to the Convention entered into force on 22 December 2000.

74. Her delegation had participated actively in the discussions on the draft convention against transnational organized crime and its three protocols, including the protocol on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and was committed to finalizing the text of those instruments at the eleventh session of the Ad Hoc Committee, currently taking place in Vienna.

75. With regard to violence against women, Japan's Council for Gender Equality had submitted to the Prime Minister in July 2000 a report entitled "Basic measures pertaining to violence against women". Since the entry into force in June 1999 of the Basic law for a gender-equal society, the Government had begun formulating a basic plan for gender equality which took into consideration the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. As part of the administrative reform of the central Government, a new Council for Gender Equality would be established in January 2001 to monitor the implementation of measures taken by the Government and to research the impact of those measures on the formation of a gender-equal society.

76. International cooperation was crucial for furthering the empowerment of women in developing countries. For the past five years, her Government had been supporting projects of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that sought to empower women in developing countries, through the Japan Women in Development Fund established in 1995 as part of the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action. One such project provided support to the programme on girls' education in Guatemala, to which Japan had contributed $510,000 from 1997 to 1999. Japan also continued to support the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the UNIFEM trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women.

77. With regard to information and communications technology, the Group of Eight summit held in Japan in July 2000 had recognized that the rapid development of information technologies was a cause for concern for some people and that greater efforts should be made to ensure that the benefits of such technologies extended to those whose access to them was currently limited. Her Government had announced that it would implement a comprehensive cooperation package in the information technology field amounting to some $15 billion over the next five years. Women in many parts of the world were among those who had been left behind, and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and its innovative GAINS campaign could play an important role in narrowing the information gap experienced by women, especially in developing countries. The current financial situation of INSTRAW was a matter of concern and careful consideration by all parties was needed to find a way to address the problem.

78. Her Government reaffirmed its commitment to full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, taking into account the further actions and initiatives called for in the outcome document of the special session. It would pursue that objective in close cooperation with its partners, including non-governmental organizations, in order to achieve a gender-equal society in the twenty-first century.

79. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) noted the success of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, at which an important document on further actions and initiatives to overcome obstacles and accelerate implementation of the commitments made in Beijing in 1995 had been adopted. New targets had also been set, taking into account new problems such as AIDS, globalization, new information and communications technologies, growing poverty and the feminization of poverty, and the proliferation of armed conflicts, especially in Africa, and their adverse effect on women and children. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals to increase the resources allocated to the Division for the Advancement of Women to enable it to meet its new responsibilities resulting from, inter alia, the entry into force on 22 December 2000 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; to strengthen the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality; and to provide INSTRAW and UNIFEM with the resources they needed to discharge their mandate fully. It was also important to continue to give high priority to issues such as women's access to all levels of decision-making, efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, and all forms of crimes against women, including traditional practices seriously affecting the health of women and children, such as female genital mutilation, honour killings and murders of passion or on racial or ethnic grounds.

80. His delegation was pleased that the objectives established at the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, had been reflected in the final document of the twenty-third special session and considered it important to mobilize the necessary resources to ensure that those objectives were met within the established time frames. It also welcomed the participation of numerous non-governmental organizations in the special session and the work that they were doing in the field; ways must be found to improve their cooperation with the General Assembly. He also commended the agencies of the United Nations system for their innovative action to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; such action should be intensified, placing special emphasis on mainstreaming a gender perspective in all their programmes and policies.

81. The advancement of women in Senegal had been reflected in the appointment of women to high-level posts in the new Government. Women also headed administrative departments and strategic public enterprises. With respect to improving the situation of poor and rural women, measures were being taken to promote women's access to land and credit, and numerous income-generating projects were being

developed. A microcredit lending institution was to be established, with a fund of 1 billion CFA francs devoted exclusively to financing projects submitted by women. There was also a Social Investment Fund and a project to combat poverty among women, with a budget of 15 billion CFA francs. His Government had the political will to work for women's civil and political rights and for the goal of gender equality. In signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it had reaffirmed its determination to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women. It had therefore decided to establish a national women's and children's rights monitoring body which would provide a framework for investigating, monitoring and following up the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocol at the national level.

82. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba) welcomed the achievement of a consensus that reflected women's principal aspirations. The provisions of the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, a document that could be considered revolutionary in the broadest sense of the word, must now be put into practice.

83. It was impossible to ignore the social reality faced by a growing proportion of the world's population, many of them women. Women's very survival as human beings was now a more pressing issue than their empowerment or their full development in all areas of life. The gap between the wealthy North and the impoverished South was widening and life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa was only 48 years, 30 years less than in the developed countries. The third world accounted for 99.5 per cent of cases of maternal mortality. In some third world countries, two out of every three girls were forced into prostitution. Two thirds of the 15.7 million women with HIV/AIDS were living in Africa.

84. High priority should also be given to action to end all forms of violence against women throughout the world. Some forms of violence, such as domestic violence, were widespread, while others were more subtle but took lives on a daily basis and caused pain and suffering the world over. There were also open forms of violence, such as genocide, brought about by aggression, State terrorism and unilateral coercive measures that violated the sovereignty of States and had consequences for women. All forms of violence must be equally condemned and rejected by the international community.

85. Access to resources, both nationally and internationally remained the key to success and an inescapable concern in meeting the goal of equality, development and peace for women. National efforts, particularly in developing countries, must be accompanied by a new climate of international cooperation, within the framework of a new international economic and social ordering which all forms of discrimination had been eliminated and which was based on full respect for the sovereignty, independence and self-determination of peoples, and within a truly just and democratic international order in which the countries which were home to the overwhelming majority of the world's inhabitants were able to participate on an equal footing in decision-making processes, thereby guaranteeing a better future for women.

86. Cuba had been the first country in the world to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the second to ratify it. The Cuban Government's unshakeable political will was reflected in the position achieved by women in Cuban society, their cultural, technical and professional level and their high rates of economic, political and social participation. Life expectancy at birth was 76.6 years for Cuban women. Nevertheless, further progress needed to be made so that more Cuban women occupied leadership positions. Those significant advances had been made despite the application of unilateral coercive measures against Cuba, particularly the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed by the United States Government, whose consequences were especially serious for women.

87. Her delegation reiterated the appeal made in the outcome document of the special session for an end to unilateral measures at variance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impeded the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children, and created obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights, including the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being and their right to food, medical care and the necessary social services. It had also been reiterated at the special session that food and medicine should not be used as tools for political pressure.

88. **Mr. Issa** (Lebanon) said that the advancement of women was very important for his country. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Beijing Conference and to Act No. 720, the Government had created the National Organization of Lebanese Women, replacing the National Committee for Lebanese Women's Affairs set up to prepare for Lebanon's participation in the Beijing Conference. The organization advised the Government and worked with various Lebanese, Arab and international non-governmental organizations. In particular, it had been involved in drafting the report that had given rise to the creation of the Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence against Women. Lebanon had many organizations that were involved in the advancement and protection of women, in particular the Council to Resist Violence against Women.

89. Lebanon's Constitution established equal rights and obligations for all citizens. Women in Lebanon had the right to administer their property, inherit and bequeath property, conclude contracts relating to insurance and commercial transactions, file lawsuits and be tried by the courts on an equal footing with men. Although some elements of de jure and de facto discrimination against women persisted as a result of religious and social customs, for instance, the fact that men were given greater family and economic responsibilities, an effort was being made to correct such elements in order to bring about a stable, balanced society in which men and women participated for the benefit of the family and the nation. The Congress was currently considering a number of bills amending the Nationality Act so that a Lebanese woman could transmit her nationality to her children born of a non-Lebanese father and also to her husband. Proposals were also being considered for amending a number of laws to bring them into line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Lebanon had ratified in 1996.

90. According to statistics, 14 per cent of Lebanese families were headed by a woman and the greatest number of working women was to be found in the education sector. Women occupied positions in almost all spheres of the country's public and political life and in the information sector and the media, where they played a very important role.

91. **Ms. Hastaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly represented a delicate compromise among various political and cultural systems. A realistic assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action indicated that, despite progress in some areas, many of the agreed targets had yet to be achieved either nationally or internationally.

92. The political declaration and the outcome document of the special session were testimony to the determination of Member States and other key actors, including non-governmental organizations and civil society, fully to implement the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action. At the same time, they highlighted obstacles and challenges affecting its full implementation, including many economic and social issues such as globalization, the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, lack of access to scientific and technological advances, increased debt burdens, drug abuse, decreasing levels of official development assistance, changing patterns of labour migratory flows, increased poverty and its impact, particularly on women, and persistent inequalities and difficulties that acted as obstacles to real progress towards gender equality, development and peace.

93. Globalization was a key factor in the rapid process of change and presented new challenges for the fulfilment of the commitments made five years previously in Beijing and again in 2000 in New York. It profoundly affected the lives of people all over the world, but women and children were the most vulnerable members of society. Although they enjoyed undeniable opportunities, they also faced many challenges and difficulties. As the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran had said at the Millennium Summit, globalization should not be utilized to open greater markets for a few or to assimilate national cultures into a uniform global one. Instead, what was required was the collective articulation of common interests, norms and laws towards ensuring equitable access to advancement at the global level.

94. In implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, her Government had taken important steps to promote respect for the human rights of women, elevate their status and facilitate their participation in all aspects of social life, in keeping with the Constitution and the principles of Islam. Her delegation hoped that the outcome document of the special session would serve as a working instrument to remove the obstacles and meet the challenges affecting the situation of women worldwide and pledged its

cooperation and commitment towards attaining the goals of the current session.

95. **Mr. Valdés** (Chile) noted that two important events for the advancement of women had taken place in 2000: the tenth ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as a result of which the Protocol would enter into force on 22 December 2000, and the holding of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the commitments made in Beijing. The review had shown that, while progress had been made, much remained to be done. Persistent violations of women's rights and fundamental freedoms on religious or cultural grounds, such as those taking place in Afghanistan, demonstrated the magnitude of the task. His delegation hoped that the day would soon come when neither lack of development nor cultural differences could be used as a pretext for violating human rights in general and women's rights in particular. It was also discouraging to note from the recent United Nations Population Fund report, *The State of World Population 2000*, that women did not enjoy the basic right to plan their families. The 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action clearly remained cause for concern. The international community must commit itself to ensuring that, in the twenty-first century, women, who made up more than half the world's population, were able to exercise their rights effectively. To achieve that goal, agreements must be implemented and translated into policies, good practices shared and specific measures adopted.

96. Chile had embarked on a new phase with the adoption of its Equal Opportunity Plan for Women 2000-2010, which embodied the aspirations and demands of women from different sectors and sought to mainstream gender policies in public institutions. The participation of women and civil society in that process was being promoted, but it was also important to ensure the participation of men, who often felt excluded or excluded themselves from the process.

97. His delegation believed that the new challenges presented by the coming century must be taken into account, such as ensuring women's access to new technologies and to science in general, as well as to the media, and establishing new alliances bringing together various agents of civil society with a view to empowering women at all levels. His Government was firmly committed to making determined efforts to address the outstanding tasks of translating legislative reforms into social reality, building on the changes already made and promoting cultural transformations to sustain them.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.